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UA12/2/1 Topper Extra

WKU Student Affairs

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WKU QB has been through it all

Who'll play where for the Toppers
Roster breakdown

see page 4

see page 7
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Fans are looking forward to WKU’s opener against Austin Peay and to the season as a whole with high hopes.

The Toppers ended the last season with a 7-5 record and, even without a bowl appearance, Topper fans are still await the opener with optimism.

WKU football fan Justin Owens, of Bowling Green, said he’s anticipating seeing more progress from last year.

“I’m most excited about seeing the Hilltoppers build and continue with the success they ended with last year,” Owens said, “which I think will translate into a win over University of Kentucky at Commonwealth Stadium on Sept. 15 and seeing sold out crowds at Smith Stadium throughout the year.”

Before the Toppers get a crack at UK, they must focus on Austin Peay, who they play at 6 p.m. this Saturday at Smith Stadium.

Owens said he “couldn’t be more excited” about this weekend’s season opener.

WKU baseball Assistant Coach Brendan Dougherty echoed the same enthusiasm.

“With the way last season ended, I think there is a lot of excitement on campus, in the athletic department, and around Bowling Green,” Dougherty said.

Much of the fans’ focus is on what the offense will look like this year without Bobby Rainey.

Rainey, who is now with the NFL’s Baltimore Ravens, graduated after breaking WKU’s single-season and career rushing records in 2011.

“When you have someone like Rainey who is playing in the NFL right now, that says a lot about your program,” Leitchfield freshman Jared Willis said. “I would like to see them build off the success they found with (Rainey).”

Owens said he’s ready to “see who will fill the shoes of Bobby Rainey.

“I don’t know if it will be just one back or a collection of backs to help fill the void,” Owens said. “Although I think there was only one Bobby Rainey, and it will take several guys stepping up to keep the running game going.”

Fans also said they were interested in the evolution of the passing game, especially in how senior quarterback Kawaun Jakes uses the weapons around him.

“Between Kawaun Jakes and (senior wide receiver) Marcus Vasquez and (senior tight end) Jack Doyle, more connections need to be made,” Bowling Green native and WKU football fan Phillip Hudnall said.

Coach Willie Taggart has talked throughout the preseason about the excitement for his team that he’s noticed on campus and around town.

That must carry over into fans in the stands on Saturday, Taggart said.

“We’ve got to get all our students to stay here,” Taggart said. “We can’t let them go back home on the weekends, especially this weekend. We just got here.

“No one should be going home this weekend. Stay here, come to L.T. Houchens-Smith Stadium. Show up and show out. We’re going to make it a snake pit. All right?”

Where to tailgate

$100 season pass tailgating areas include:
—The grass lot on the University Boulevard side of McCormack Hall.
—The grass lot between Avenue of Champions, Gilbert Hall, Central Heat Plant and College Heights Boulevard.

$20 game day tailgating areas include:
—The grass lot in front of McLean Hall.

Student tailgating areas include:
—The Kentucky Street Lot
—The lot behind the Sigma Nu house.

TopperTown tailgating areas include:
—The grass lot in front of Bates Runner Hall.

Tailgating areas open six hours prior to kickoff and close 30 minutes prior to kickoff.

*Source: WKU Parking and Transportation Services

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<th>WKU</th>
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Kawaun Jakes has seen it all in his four years on The Hill.

"It's been a lot more efficient than it's been in the past," the coach said. "There's a lot of time that goes to planning and the No. 5 safety in conference.

"We go into his office, he doesn't say too much, but he's there for us." He's experienced more than a number of things in history.

"It's been a lot more efficient and things like that. We're all more focused on the game." He's seen more than a number of things in history.

"It's a reality of life for a Football Bowl Subdivision player bond in which Sheridan can mentor players going through the same things I went through as a high school student athlete." He's seen more than a number of things in history.

"He's been there before. He knows what it takes to lead the Toppers to the postseason this season." He's seen more than a number of things in history.

"We're all more focused on the game." He's seen more than a number of things in history.

"You're still a college athlete and things like that. It's just about trying to give our best every time we go out there." He's seen more than a number of things in history.

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The WKU roster is filled with several returning starters as well as some newcomers who are expected to contribute right away.

**Quarterbacks** — Senior Kawaun Jakes will be calling the shots at the start of the year. Redshirt freshman James Mauro and sophomore Brandon Doughty are backing him.

**Running backs** — Junior Keshawn Simpson gets the start in a “running back by committee,” where he will share carries with junior Antonio Andrews and freshman Leon Allen as they hope to replicate the production of Bobby Rainey. Junior Kadeem Jones will line up for the Toppers at fullback.

**Wide receivers** — Sophomore Willie McNeal hopes to highlight this group as he’s fully recovered from an ACL tear. He’ll be joined by junior Neil Wilson, sophomores Rico Brown and Boe Brand, freshman Austin Aikens and several others.

**Tight ends** — Senior Jack Doyle is the highlight of a deep group. Doyle led WKU in receptions and receiving yards last year and was recently named to the watch list for the John Mackey Award, given to the best tight end in the nation each year.

**Defensive line** — Senior end Quanterus Smith led WKU in sacks last season but is suspended from Saturday’s game, and sophomore T.J. Smith will replace him. Seniors Cole Tischer, Jamarcus Allen and Rammell Lewis will join him.

**Linebackers** — Junior Andrew Jackson led the team in tackles and tackles for a loss last season and will be back in the middle this season, along with juniors Bar’ee and Xavius Boyd.

**Cornerbacks** — Juniors Arius Wright and Tyree Robinson will be responsible for covering opposing wide receivers for WKU.

**Safeties** — Senior Kareem Peterson will start at free safety, and junior Kiante Young will be No. 1 for the Toppers at strong safety. Look for sophomore Florida transfer Jonathan Dowling to see time at strong safety as well.

**Kicking** — Sophomore Jesse Roy has been tabbed as starting kicker, while junior Hendrix Brakefield will be responsible for punts and kickoffs.

**Returns** — Andrews is expected to return most punts and kickoffs. Robinson and McNeal, a 2010 freshman All-American, will see time in the special team’s backfield as well.
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